

EISENHOWER

MAY 8-SEPTEMBER 8, 1954

197

Eisenhower badly needed British and French support for SEATO and EDC, he threatened to break with them—over tiny Guatemala. Third, he declared a naval blockade and enforced it. Fourth, he had authorized the first American use of the veto in the U.N., which would have given away one of America's prize propaganda assets, that only the Russians used the veto.

Clearly, the President took grave risks over Guatemala. He also opened himself to the criticism that American policy toward Central America was dictated by United Fruit (the company, incidentally, got its land back from Castillo Armas). But he did not overthrow the elected government of Guatemala, or risk SEATO and EDC, or declare a blockade, in order to protect the holdings of the United Fruit stockholders. What he feared was not the loss of American profits in Guatemala, but rather the loss of all Central America. Milton had reported to him that the area was a breeding ground for Communism, because of the awful extremes between rich and poor, and that long from the United States had to work to correct the disparity. But short term, Milton had warned, the United States could never afford to allow Communism to establish a foothold in Central America. If the Russians ever got a base there, they could export subversion, arms, a whole guerrilla uprising to the surrounding countryside. In Eisenhower's nightmare, the dominoes would fall in both directions, to the north of Guatemala toward Panama, endangering the Canal Zone, and to the south, bringing Communism to the Rio Grande. My God," Eisenhower told his Cabinet, "just think what it would mean if Mexico went Communist!" He shook his head at the thought of that long, unguarded border, and all those Mexican Communists to the south of it.⁴⁷ To prevent the dominoes from falling, he was prepared to, and did, take great risks over tiny Guatemala.

At the height of the uproar over Guatemala, Churchill and Eden returned for talks. It was June 25, the day the Security Council was to vote on Guatemala. Eisenhower "talked cold turkey" to the British, and then reluctantly and unhappily agreed to abstain and to recommend to the French that they do likewise. Churchill later complained to Eisenhower that "Dulles has said a couple of things to Eden that we have been said."⁴⁸ For the rest of Churchill's visit his time was taken up with an address to Congress, stag dinners, formal and informal receptions, and other social events. Eisenhower found it difficult to talk to Churchill about matters of substance. The PM had had no contact with Eisenhower since he last saw Eisenhower at Bermuda, was in his dot-